

Area Plan Summary

Rice Street Small Area Plan and Forty-Acre Study

Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

Recommended by the Planning Commission - July 15, 2005

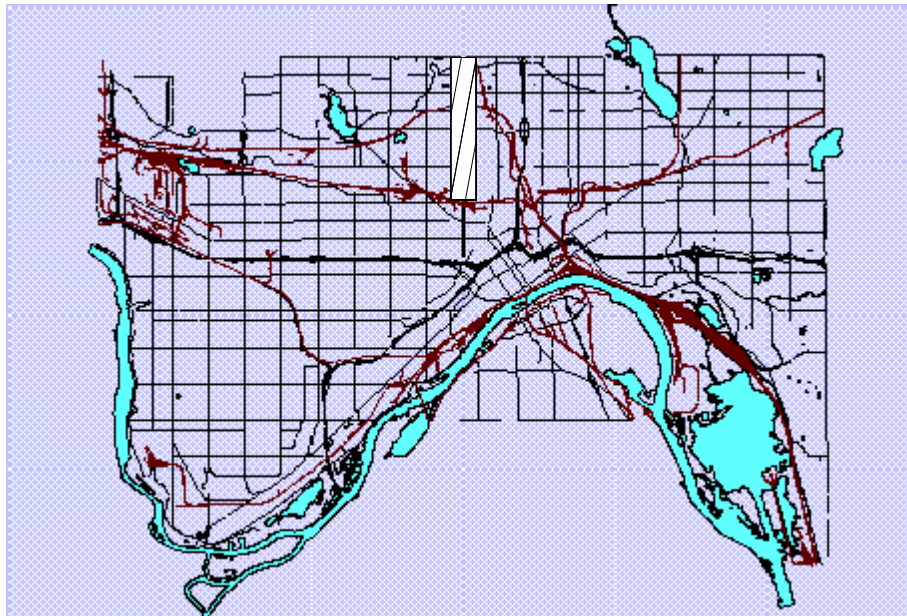
Adopted by the City Council - September 7, 2005

*This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the **Rice Street Small Area Plan and Forty-Acre Study**. The plan addresses the area along Rice Street from Larpenteur to the railroad tracks south of Acker. The plan contains an overview of the current conditions of the area, visions and goals, strategies, and implementation steps. A forty-acre study accompanies the plan, with recommendations for rezoning.*

Copies of the full-length plan are available for review at the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and the office of Sparc.

Location

The study area is bounded by Larpenteur to the north, Park to the east, the railroad tracks near Acker to the south, and Albemarle to the west.



Rice Street Small Area Plan Area

Vision

Rice Street should be a safe, successful commercial area that welcomes pedestrians as well as automobiles. There will be outdoor seating for restaurants and bars. Buildings are built up to the sidewalk, with doors and windows opening to the street. There should be adequate parking in the back of the buildings. The houses along Rice Street and in the immediate area will be well maintained and managed.

Specific Action Strategies and Implementation Steps

Overall

1. The two areas for improvement in the immediate future are Rice Street between Atwater and Maryland, and the Rice/Maryland intersection.

Zoning

2. Many buildings along Rice were built in response to streetcars. These buildings are pedestrian-friendly and built up to the sidewalk. To keep the character of the area, one strategy is to rezone certain properties along Rice from B3 to TN2 and B2. (B3 General Business allows a wide range of automobile-oriented commercial uses, B2 Community Business is more restrictive than B3, and TN2 Traditional Neighborhood includes design guidelines that enhance the pedestrian experience.) The rezoning map is attached.

3. In addition to rezoning proposed in this plan, future rezoning of properties along Rice Street to TN2 is encouraged to improve the mixed-use character of the area.

Industrial

4. The Plan does not recommend additional industrial land uses on Rice Street. Due to their unique geography, lack of visibility and limited access, areas near the railroad tracks are appropriate for existing industrial uses to remain.

The bridge over the BNSF railroad tracks at Acker (Bridge #62008) signifies the southern entrance into the Rice Street study area. Improving the appearance of the bridge over the railroad tracks as well as the industrial and commercial uses nearby would have a positive impact on the image of Rice Street, and benefit the businesses and residences in the study area. Possible aesthetic improvements include historic style lighting, decorative rails, as well as above-standard guardrails and above-standard fencing on bridge approaches and rights-of-way.

Commercial

5. The primary sites for infill development in the southern portion of Rice are 1) the Flower Hut site between Atwater and Winnipeg; 2) the former Twin Cities roofing site between Lyton and Sycamore; and 3) intensified use of Xcel Energy's parking lot in the form of a parking structure above first-floor commercial.

6. The streetscape along Rice Street is important and needs improvement. This can be accomplished through better sidewalk paving and lighting, more defined and well-maintained

commercial facades, well-managed outdoor dining space along the street, more planting, clear and uncluttered signage, and the utilization or redevelopment of vacant properties.

7. Design guidelines

Besides zoning, which is mandatory, the plan also contains a set of voluntary design guidelines that would assist owners looking to renovate a commercial property.

Residential

8. The plan calls for increased housing rehabilitation in the neighborhood around Rice Street. Most homes in this area are around 100 years old, and many lack proper maintenance. One way to achieve this goal is to offer low-interest rehab loans to property owners.

9. The plan also encourages residential reuse of existing properties along Rice. The market for new housing or senior housing in the area should be explored.

10. The North End has a high proportion of renters, and one of the goals of the District 6 Plan (2004) is to increase homeownership in the area. The plan calls for creative financing programs offered through the City and local non-profit organizations, as well as outreach to realtors and lenders to generate interest among home buyers. The access and affordability of the housing stock, and the strong neighborhood feel of the North End, could be used to effectively market the North End.

Priority Actions for City Participation

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or signification participation by city government. Community groups and city departments should implement the projects identified in this summary by applying for city resources in competitive processes such as the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and Sales Tax Revitalization program (STAR), and working through the regular operating programs of relevant city departments.

1. Rezoning properties fronting Rice Street from B3 and I1 to B2 and TN2. (City of St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development, Sparc, property owners)

TN2 districts would provide more design guidelines and review for new construction, allow a mix of residential densities and mixed housing-commercial buildings, restrict new construction and expansion of industrial and certain automobile-related uses, and with more transit services, potentially allow reduced parking requirements. Retail, restaurants and service businesses would still be permitted along Rice Street.

Rezoning from B3 to B2 would also restrict new construction and expansion of industrial and certain automobile-related uses while allowing a variety of restaurants, retail, office and service businesses.

2. Adopt a set of voluntary design guidelines for commercial redevelopment and improvement. (Sparc, business and property owners)
3. Improve sidewalk and lighting along Rice Street. First priority should be given to the area between Atwater and Maryland and the Maryland/Rice intersection. (City of St. Paul Public Works, Ramsey County Public Works, Sparc, NEBA, District 6)
4. Conduct a study for the Maryland and Rice intersection to increase pedestrian safety, reduce traffic accidents, and facilitate traffic flow. (Sparc, Ramsey County, City Department of Public Works, District 6)
5. Provide housing and commercial financing programs, including rehabilitation loans/grants and low-interest mortgages to increase commercial vitality, improve the housing stock and promote homeownership. (PED, Sparc, District 6)
6. Utilize public funding to assemble and clean up sites and provide gap financing for mixed-use, commercial, or housing development projects in the study area. (PED, Sparc, District 6)
7. Conduct a parking study and explore banning rush hour parking along Rice. (Public Works, District 6, business owners, residents)
8. Conduct a market study to determine the most appropriate commercial strategy on Rice Street (PED, Sparc, business owners, residents)

Planning Commission Findings

The Planning Commission finds that the Rice Street Small Area Plan is consistent with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and relevant sub-area plans.

Planning Process

This plan was developed by the Rice Street Small Area Plan Task Force, consisting of property and business owners from the study area, representatives of community-based organizations, churches and schools, with staff assistance from Sparc and the City's Department of Planning and Economic Development. The Task Force met eight times between August 2004 and April 2005, and held two large community meetings with over 80 participants.

Attachment:
Rice Street Rezoning Map